

1. (currently amended) A workforce management method operative in a computer network for enabling entities to trade work schedules, where the entities are contact center agents that report to a supervisor, the method comprising:

configuring a supervisor display by which the supervisor selects which individual agents are permitted to trade work schedules, and by which the supervisor specifies a set of rules that allow work schedules to be traded, the set of rules including at least a first rule configured by the supervisor and that identifies a maximum number of time units per a given time period of an agent that is permitted to trade a work schedule, and a second rule configured by the supervisor and that identifies a time period into which a work schedule to be traded must fit into in order to satisfy a trade;

if a first agent is permitted to trade a work schedule as indicated by the supervisor selection, having a enabling the first entity post for display and agent to offer for trading a first work schedule, the first work schedule having associated therewith a second work schedule as defined by the first ~~entity~~ agent that the first ~~entity~~ agent is willing to accept in trade for the first work schedule; and

if a second agent is permitted to trade a work schedule as indicated by the supervisor selection and if the trade does not violate either the first rule or the second rule as configured by the supervisor, enabling a the second ~~entity~~ agent to accept the first ~~entity's agent's~~ first work schedule if a given condition is met.

2. (cancelled)

3. (cancelled)

4. (cancelled)

5. (currently amended) The method as described in claim 1 ~~wherein the given condition is that the first and second entities further including having the supervisor~~ configure the supervisor display to specify a third rule that restricts the first and second agents from trading work schedules unless the first and second agents are members of a

given workgroup.

6. (currently amended) The method as described in claim 1 ~~wherein the given condition is that the first and second entities~~ further including having the supervisor configure the supervisor display to specify a third rule that restricts the first and second agents from trading work schedules unless the first and second agents share a given skill.

7. (currently amended) The method as described in claim 1 wherein the ~~given condition is that a given work schedule being traded does not exceed a given number of time units per a given time period~~ time period into which a work schedule to be traded must fit identifies a week period having a specified length, the week period starting on a specified day of the week or on a given date.

8. (currently amended) The method as described in claim 1 wherein the ~~given condition is that the given work schedule being traded satisfies a given time constraint~~ time period into which a work schedule to be traded must fit identifies a given calendar month.

9. (currently amended) The method as described in claim 1 ~~wherein the given condition is that a~~ further including having the supervisor configure the supervisor display to specify an advance notice requirement for permitting a that must be respected before a schedule trade to may occur ~~has been respected.~~

10. (currently amended) Apparatus for use in conjunction with a database of agent work schedule information, comprising:

a processor;

code executable by the processor for generating a display from which a supervising entity manages how a set of agents can trade work schedules; and

code executable by the processor and responsive to a selection in the display for enabling enforcement of ~~at least one rule selected from~~ a set of rules that allow work schedules to be traded: (a) if first approved by the supervising entity, (b) if agents are members of a given workgroup, (c) if agents have a same given skill attribute, (d) if a given work schedule being traded does not exceed a given number of time units per a given time period; (e) if a given work schedule being traded satisfies a given time constraint, where the given time constraint is configured by the supervising entity and identifies a time period into which a work schedule to be traded must fit into in order to satisfy the given time constraint; ~~or~~ and (f) if ~~a~~ an advance notice requirement for permitting a schedule trade to occur has been respected.

11-17. (cancelled)